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4 OVERSIGHT HEARING ON RONGELAP,

5 PURSUANT TO P.L. 99-239

6

7 Thursday, November 16, 1989

8

9 House of Representatives,

10 Subcommittee on Insular and International

11 Affairs,

12 Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,

13 Washington, D. C.

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16 The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:40 a.m., in
17 Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Ron de Lugo
18 [chairman of the subcommittee], presiding.

Transcript of DR EH
 testimony 11-16-89.
Origins of the "fresh
look" on page 81.
NAS came many months later.
- Rich Weston

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17 Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Ron de Lugo
18 [chairman of the subcommittee], presiding.

1747 STATEMENT OF JOHN L. MEINHARDT, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT
1748 SECRETARY, DEFENSE PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
1749

1750 Mr. MEINHARDT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the
1751 remark about not being responsible, but I think that you and
1752 other members of the committee have I think adequately
1753 characterized that any citizen of this country does have a
1754 responsibility. I share in that view, along with you and
1755 members of this body.

1756 Mr. DE LUGO. I thank you for that observation.

1757 Mr. MEINHARDT. Thank you, sir.

1758 It is a pleasure for me to appear before you this morning.
1759 As you introduced me, I am the Principal Deputy for Defense
1760 Programs, Department of Energy.

1761 As you are well aware, since the confirmation of Admiral
1762 Watkins in February of this year, he had made as one of his
1763 top priorities the institution of a new culture within the
1764 Department that places great emphasis on the importance of
1765 the environment, safety and health matters, and particularly
1766 those related to the defense applications within the
1767 Department. He has addressed these areas very vigorously
1768 and aggressively, and major reviews are underway in
1769 literally every category of activity within the Department,
1770 be they weapons production or research activities, with a
1771 view toward safety and health factors, as well as the

1772 environment.

1773 Today's hearing, Mr. Chairman, is the first opportunity
1774 that I think any member of the Department has had to appear
1775 before you and perhaps represent this new culture embodied
1776 in Admiral Watkins. The subject of this hearing is of
1777 utmost concern to us. Let me begin by setting forth some of
1778 the background.

1779 We, as a country, accept full responsibility for
1780 compensation to the citizens of the Marshall Islands
1781 resulting from the Bravo event, as well as other testing
1782 between 1946 and 1958.

1783 As you are well aware, the Compact of Free Association
1784 Act, passed in 1986, provided for a full and final
1785 settlement of claims arising from the nuclear testing
1786 program. This Act also required, under section 103(h) that
1787 the Department of Energy shall continue to provide special
1788 medical care and logistical support to the remaining members
1789 of the population who were exposed to radiation by the Bravo
1790 event.

1791 Finally, the Act required, under section 103(i), that the
1792 data of the Department of Energy relating to the
1793 radiological conditions on Rongelap resulting from the test
1794 be reviewed by a qualified scientist. Dr. Henry Kohn,
1795 mentioned earlier today, was selected as this independent
1796 expert to conduct this review, and he will be presenting his

1797 findings later before the committee.

1798 Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, the Secretary recognizes this
1799 committee's deep and legitimate concern on this matter and
1800 intends to give the issues raised by the Rongelap people an
1801 additional review. I can assure you and the Rongelap people
1802 that such a review will be done as expeditiously as
1803 possible. We plan to report the results of this
1804 comprehensive review, which will also include a review of
1805 the assembled data, by next summer.

1806 Let me hasten to add that the technical data in support of
1807 the Department's current position has been reviewed by
1808 numerous experts and the Rongelap Reassessment Project.
1809 Therefore, we stand by these data. *Dec 28 / AL*

1810 A meeting between representatives of the Rongelapese and
1811 the Secretary's Panel for the Evaluation of Epidemiology
1812 Research Activities within the Department has been scheduled
1813 for next month. This session is to permit the Rongelapese
1814 to share their views with acknowledged experts charged with
1815 reviewing the Department's overall epidemiology program.
1816 The executive director of that panel has assured
1817 Departmental officials that the input of the Rongelap people
1818 will be considered in examining the methods and processes
1819 currently used by DOE to develop its policy in matters where
1820 epidemiology is important in resolving issues.

1821 We plan to also invite the views of those within DOE who

1822 have worked on these issues for many years, as well as Dr.
1823 Kohn of the Rongelap Reassessment Project, and we will
1824 invite the attendance of the Scientific Advisory Panel of
1825 the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, as established under the
1826 Compact Act.

1827 In summary, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee,
1828 we pledge to you that with the cooperation of the Rongelap
1829 people, the Department of Energy will conduct an additional
1830 review on the issues raised and will objectively evaluate
1831 their merits. It is our intention that this review be
1832 completed within six months.

1833 I thank the committee for the chance to appear before you,
1834 and I will take any questions that you may have.

1835 [The statement of John L. Meinhardt follows:]

1836

1837 ***** INSERT 4-1 *****

1838 Mr. DE LUGO. Let me say, Secretary Meinhardt, this is
1839 very good news that you've brought to this committee. I
1840 mean, we have been getting the run around and we've been
1841 dealing with administrations that have been intransigent in
1842 the past. You just tell Admiral Watkins that it's good to
1843 have him aboard. I am very pleased with what you have said
1844 here this morning to this committee.

1845 First of all, your statement is a very bold one, where you
1846 say the United States accepts full responsibility for
1847 compensation to citizens of the Marshall Islands resulting
1848 from the nuclear testing program conducted from 1946 to
1849 1958, where you're setting up a program that we would expect
1850 to get a conclusion within six months--is that correct?

1851 Mr. MEINHARDT. That's right, sir.

1852 Mr. DE LUGO. I'm very pleased.

1853 I want to ask you to take a message back to Secretary
1854 Watkins, that this subcommittee is very appreciative of the
1855 new approach, or as you refer to it, the new culture at the
1856 Energy Department. Believe me, it is welcomed. We would
1857 like to see more of that. Admiral Watkins is to be
1858 commended.

1859 For the first time within my memory--and I've been a member
1860 of this committee and Congress for many, many years--the
1861 Department of Energy is willing to take an objective--and I
1862 stress the word "objective"--new look at the position it